

Centralization of decision-making – a way to bypass expert advice? Comparison of Irish and Slovak advisory committees during Covid-19 pandemic

Hudec Róbert Martin

Comenius University, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia

Connaughton Bernadette

*University of Limerick, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Limerick,
Ireland*

Staronova Katarina

Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia

Abstract: During last decades, the decision-making process started to change, with greater involvement of different types of actors, including policy advisors and experts. This decentralization has various possible forms and differs in levels of political control over the influence and entrance of advisors and experts in decision-making processes. However, the cases of both the financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemics show us attempts of governments to reassert control over policy advice and centralize decision-making.

This article aims to explain how two different countries used their PAS (policy advisory system) during times of crisis. The comparison is made in two selected cases, Ireland and Slovakia. These countries differ greatly in their political systems, administrative traditions, and their setting of politico-administrative relationships, where Irish public administration is highly meritocratic, which contrasts with Slovak overly politicized unstable civil service. However, during the Covid-19 pandemics, both countries established new advisory units instead of using the already established ones, the Irish National Public Health Emergency Team and the Permanent Crisis Committee in Slovakia. In Slovakia, in addition, an informal Consortium of experts was in operation.

This paper focuses on analyzing how and why these bodies created and how they replaced existing advisory units that were already functioning within the countries, what their role within policy-advice supply was and how was their advice utilized by decision makers.